

Necessary Actions Of The Heart: Sabr & Ihtisaab

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...affliction benefits a believer. The benefit, however, is not deserved unless one fulfils two basic requirements: sabr and ihtisaab.

When struck by an affliction, a believer should exhibit patience and perseverance. He should never rebel or express dissatisfaction with Allaah's decree. This attitude is called sabr.

Furthermore, a believer should trust that Allaah (subhaanahu wa ta'aala) will reward him for his affliction. This is called ihtisaab.

'Abdullaah bin 'Amr (radiyallaahu anhu) reported that Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said:

"When Allaah deprives one of His believing servants from a loved one – if he displays sabr and ihtisaab, Allaah will not approve for him a reward other than Jannah." ¹

Sabr and Ihtisaab are two aspects of one obligation: full submission to Allaah's decree. They are important actions of the heart,² and are required from all believers during times of affliction.

SABR

When a person is struck by an affliction, he should display patience and acceptance of the calamity that struck him. Allaah (subhaanahu wa ta'aala) says:

"We will surely try you with danger, hunger, and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits – so, give glad tidings to the patient." [al-Baqarah (2):155]

'Ataa bin Abee Rabaah reported that Ibn Abbaas (radiyallaahu anhu) asked him, "Do you want to see a woman from the people of Jannah?" He said, "Certainly." Ibn Abbaas then said:

"It is this black woman. She came to the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) saying, 'I have (epileptic) seizures, and I get exposed, so ask Allaah to cure me.' He (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said:

"If you wish, be patient, and you will be granted Jannah.
Or if you wish, I will ask Allaah to cure you."

She replied, 'I will be patient! But I become exposed (because of falling), so ask Allaah that I do not become exposed.' And he (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) did.³

Patience should be manifest from the beginning, and should not be marred or damaged by the magnitude of the loss.

¹ Recorded by an-Nasaa'ee. Verified to be hasan by al-Albaanee (Ahkaamul-Janaa'iz p34)

² Contrary to actions of the limbs, a person's action of the heart is not visible to other people. It dwells in his heart, and relates to his faith and belief. Other actions of the heart include: fear, hope, love, tawwakkul (reliance), and so on.

³ Recorded by al-Bukhaaree, Muslim, and others.

Anas (radyallaahu anhu) reported that Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) passed by a woman crying next to a grave. He told her:

"Have taqwaa of Allaah, and be patient."

Not recognising him, she responded, "Leave me alone, you have not been struck by an affliction like mine!" She was then told that he was Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam). Extremely distressed and agitated at her blunder, she hastened to him and said, "O Allaah's Messenger, I did not recognise you." The Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi was sallam) replied:

"Indeed, patience should be displayed at the beginning of the affliction."⁴

IHTISAAB

In addition to sabr, a person who is struck by an affliction should look forward to Allaah's rewards and forgiveness for that affliction – even if it is minute. This is called ihtisaab. Allaah will surely reward those who display sincere ihtisaab.

Also, Abu Hurayrah (radyallaahu anhu) reported that the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said:

"If a Muslim is pricked by (as little as) a thorn in the worldly life and he anticipates Allaah's reward for it, he will be absolved of some of his sins on Judgement day."⁵

⁴ Recorded by al-Bukhaaree, Muslim, and others.

⁵ Recorded by al-Bukhaaree in al-Adabul-Mufrad (no.507). Verified to be authentic by al-Albaanee.